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A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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THE GRACIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 2, 1869.

"For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."—Heb. ii. 11.

In the verses immediately preceding, the writer had set forth the incarnation, humiliation, suffering, and death of Christ Jesus, as an indispensable condition of the great work of lifting the race of man into the divine nature. Then he identifies and unites the two parties. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Those for whom Christ suffered, for whom he became perfect through suffering—that is, perfect as a Saviour (for as a God he needed no perfection)—are lifted into his household, and are become one with him. This idea runs through the whole New Testament, and with an emphasis which our thoughts and reflections, much as they may hover about it, and apprehend it, do not recognize with any adequate fullness.

Men are *adopted*, we are told. They are of God's *household*. And that meant more in those days than it now means, by a difference of social arrangements in life. They are *sons;* they are *heirs;* they are Christ's *brethren;* they are united to him as the *branch* to the *vine*—and so on, through every figure by which unity and identity can be expressed, and drawn from men's civic relations, from their social relations, and from nature itself in its exterior developments.

The personal relations of God to the human race have given to human life a dignity and a value, and to human experience a moral worth, before unknown. All the feeble struggles and aspirations, the tempta-

Lesson: Heb. xii. 18-29. Hymns (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 681, 922.

tions and the trials of the race, their sorrows and sufferings, that wonderful and immeasurable scene of pain and anguish which has wrapped the globe, in its long history, as with a mysterious cloud, become now intelligible, and have a moral meaning. The whole creation has not groaned and travailed in pain for nothing. There have been labor-pains and throes of spiritual birth. And when Christ, as the very experience of sorrow and suffering, identified himself with the human race, in suffering with them and for them he gave to the work of sorrow and of suffering a moral meaning that it could not have had but for this divine identification.

The mere human impulse could have found special and local reasons for doubting whether God could be proud of his disciples. There was much in the early condition of the first Christians which might lead them to wonder at such a declaration as we have read this morning. It might have led to the feeling that there was the best reason why Christ should be ashamed of his own—ashamed in such a sense as to be unwilling, at least, to have it known that they belonged to him. For their nationality was an odious and unpopular one. The Jews were the hated of all the earth. With singular capacity and power, this race has surpassed all others in the art of being well hated. And they have not got over it, nor forgotten the lore of it. And it was so in the beginning of the Christian church. And that the first disciples should have been called from among the Jews is not strange, if you consider the moral training which it seems to have been the mission of that race of people to establish. But if you look at the unpopularity of the Jews, not another nation could have been selected on the globe apparently less likely to have been favored. And of these odious and unpopular Jews the primitive disciples were from among the poorest. They were despised by their own rulers, and were cast out by their own fellow-citizens. Alike by the Jew and by the Gentile they were held to be despicable. And it meant much, to say to such Christians, to disciples who had adopted a superstition, as the Gentile thought, who had apostatized, as the Jews thought, who were the offscouring of the offscouring, who were the most detested of the nation—it meant much to say to them that Christ was not ashamed to call them brethren. It meant more than it can well mean again. It had a local and special significance. There were reasons, however, why, from the human side, one might have expected that the divine Being would be ashamed of men—that is, as of creatures to be made companionable. For you will take notice that this is not simply the expression of a feeling. He is not only not ashamed of them; but he is not ashamed of them as *brethren*. That is the declaration. He is not ashamed to make them of his own name, and household, and lineage, and to be identified with them. He is not ashamed of

them. There are many persons that we are not ashamed of as acquaintances; but we should not wish to go further than that. There are many that we should not be ashamed of as servants and laborers for us, and with us; but we should not choose to go further than that. The declaration here, however, is, that Christ was not ashamed to call them *brethren.* And to call them brethren was to unite them to himself in the most intimate relationship.

Now, the absolute inferiority of the human soul and mind to the divine would lead one, in his meditations, to suppose that God could not well other than be ashamed. Adult companionship does not demand equality. It demands, however, some moral proportion. The divine nature is illustrated here in this—that the feeling of God toward men, in their inferiority, is apparently feeling without regard to the coming character. God sustains toward the whole human race, we may believe, just the feeling which a true parent sustains toward a newborn child, while it is as yet neither good nor bad, but is certainly feeble, weak, infinitely out of proportion to the parent. That child is loved for no reason that you can see in the child, but for the simple reason that the soul has been so made that it does love infancy; and this shadows out the moral truth that the divine nature is such that from its inherent character—if I might so say, from its *organic necessity*—it loves beings infinitely lower upon the scale than itself. The feeble, the ignorant, the low—God loves them, and has infinite compassion for them, and is not ashamed of them.

But quite beyond and different from this, are presumptive reasons why God should be ashamed—namely, in moral delinquency. When man's nature begins to unfold into character, it does not unfold symmetrically; it does not unfold beautifully. Not moral inferiority alone, is there; but the obliquities of man's moral nature come with his unfolding. That which a man proposes to himself as law, that which he assumes as his ideal, is perpetually rebuking him, and sitting in judgment upon him. A man who lives for any purpose outside of his own passions, for any higher purpose, must needs, in comparing himself with his own ideal from day to day, have times of humiliation of spirit. And if, instead of his own imperfect rule of life, he takes the law of God, the law of purity, of truth, of holy love, and measures himself by that law, which grows with his own growth, how does he condemn himself as impure, as selfish, as ignoble, as low-minded, as far below the proper associations that belong to him by his heritage.

It is this that awakens in every one of us, as a part of our Christian experience, a latent feeling that God, though for Christ's sake he may tolerate us, is, after all, obliged to do it with some shame as well as displeasure.

This comes home even after we have learned that God is gracious. I take it that there is no Christian who has not such fluctuations of experience as lead him at times almost to be unwilling to lift up his face before Christ. We go to Christ, sometimes, with the same shamefacedness with which we as children went to our parents, when we were conscious that our conduct was such as made them ashamed of us. At such times the child can not look the parent in the face, and turns its eyes away, and is scarlet with blushes. The child, when it knows it has done unworthily, when it knows it has done dishonorable things, imputes to the parent a sense of shame in its behalf. And every Christian has times of despondency, not only, but of sober and just conviction that he has humbled himself—not in the noble sense of *humility;* that he has dishonored himself,; and that he has brought scandal or dishonor upon the name of his Master. And in these hours one goes to Christ with the feeling that he must be ashamed too. Or rather, we are apt to stand aloof, and wait till the poignancy of the feeling has passed away. And we are ashamed to pray, and afraid to commune. As long as the spirit of a man accuses itself only of generic transgression, so long he can in some way find alleviation. But it is when we have been overrun, and thrown into the gulf of iniquitous pride, it is when by vanity we have been snared, it is when by the feelings we have been led on from wickedness to wickedness, it is when we have been in the exercise of the malign passions, it is when the experience is fresh, it is when conviction comes as by a divine revelation, and we are pierced with thoughts of our own guiltiness before God, that we can scarcely lift up our head before God, and are overwhelmed with the thought that Christ must needs be ashamed of us. And yet, it is of just such that Christ says he is not ashamed. He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, as we shall see.

The shame spoken of is not simply a general feeling. It is to be interpreted by its relation to the idea of personal communion. Christ is not ashamed to call men even *brethren.* Conceive of the most advanced and noble Christians that ever have lived in this world—of Martyn and Brainerd, as missionary martyrs; of Fénélon and Pascal, as contemplative Christians; and many other names that will be suggested to you severally; and compare these, not with their own kind, not with inferior natures, not with the average of the vulgar race, but with the character and condition of the just made perfect. Compare the most peerless saint that walks among men with your ideal of the just and the perfect before God. You will perceive that while yet on earth, while subject to weakness and temptation, while under the influence of custom and habit, the very highest and best might well be looked upon, by Him who is crowned with glory and honor, with compassion. "Hardly," one would say, "would God be willing to

identify himself with any human being—with even the highest and best." Yet so it is. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. That we should not be ashamed to call them brethren; that we should aspire to do it; that, conscious of their superiority to us, we should take it to be an honor for them to associate with us; that we should regard it as a condescension for these eminent Christians to look upon us compassionately—that is not surprising; but that out of heaven, out of the society of the blessed, Christ should look down upon the best even that are in the midst of the toil and trouble of this world, and call them brethren, does excite some surprise.

If you consider, now, how far below these, ordinary Christians live; how little there is that enters into the Christian experience; how little exaltation there is in the greatest number of men's hours; how little in common piety there is of heroism; how intermittent the best are; how many slumberous hours they have; how many stupid hours; what vast power there yet is in the inferior passions; how the divine life is, as it were, but in the germ; how the animal life is in its very strength; if you reflect how far from that ideal which Christ set before us the ordinary, average Christian experience is, and how far it is below the eminent Christian experience to which we have alluded, men might well express surprise that Christ should be willing to call such Christians brethren. And yet he points to those that stand in the ordinary lot of life, the ordinary Christian experience, and says, "I am not ashamed to call them brethren." The Christian that is tempted, and easily temptable; the Christian that forgets; the Christian that is cowardly, and does not dare to do his duty; the Christian that intermits duty, or mixes his experience with a perpetual right meaning and a perpetual falling below his intent; the Christian that mars his own peace; the Christian into whose soul sally those passions and lusts that disturb, stir up, soil his mind—even for him Christ has more than compassion. He says of such, "I am not ashamed to call them brethren. I am not ashamed to identify myself with them. They may tke may name as if it were their own; and their names are written on the palms of my hands. I am not ashamed to call the poor, the feeble, the staggering Christians, brethren."

Far below this level there is a throng who can scarcely be thought to have even a beginning; and yet, there is a single spark. There are occasional impulses as if their souls would turn toward God. It is a wish, rather than a desire; a desire, rather than a will or choice. There are hours and moods in which these low-living Christians perceive divine truth; but they are far away. Their summer is very short, and their winter is very long. And we might say of such, "Surely, it can not be true that we can apply this declaration of the Master to them, and say, 'Christ is not ashamed to call them

brethren.'" Full of inconsistency are they; full of folly to-day and sorrow to morrow—sorrow that does not save them. Joys and follies mix, plunging them headlong into worldliness of spirit, followed by that impotent repentance that is sequent upon it. Bold are they for the world, but timid for righteousness; unable to leave the world, and unwilling to leave Christ; in a strait; suffering; rent; pulled now one way, and now another; and hardly daring to say to their fellow-men, "I am a Christian;" almost ashamed of their own name because their inconsistency is so great. Ah! can it be that Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren? He is not. He has been made in the likeness of men, and has entered into the full temptation of men, that he might know to the uttermost, and to the very bottom, what man suffers. And while he knows the wickedness of such infirmity, of such an imperfect Christian life, he also knows how to have compassion upon it; and he knows how to save those that put their trust in him to the *uttermost*—not uttermost horizontally, but uttermost vertically. The lowest, poorest, meanest of Christian attainments find in Christ Jesus a spirit that is not ashamed.

We do not suppose the teacher is ashamed of that promising pupil, that premium pupil, who is to take off the honors. We can easily conceive that the teacher is not ashamed of the intermediate scholars. But there are some dullards at the bottom that themselves feel ashamed. Yet every great-hearted teacher, who once has undertaken to care for his school, takes in the bottom of the class as really as the top. If a teacher be of a large nature, he hovers with more compassion over the dull and furthest behind, than over the bright, that make the easiest leaps, and reach the highest. For although the upper end of the class is the most promising, the other is the most needy. And it is the nature of love to take care of those that most need care. It is the crippled child that is the idol of the mother. It is the one that she has worked the most for. It is the one that has wrung the most tears out of her eyes. It is the one that she has had to bear the most with. It is the one with whom her own nature is most identified. It is not the one that is the most royally endowed. And when you address yourself to the work of sympathy for the purpose of doing good to a soul, then the need of that soul becomes the argument and the measure of your own compassion; and you associate yourself, you identify yourself, ultimately, with those that are the most needy. Who could not, what child could not take a piece of soft pine, whose grain all runs one way, and easily whittle it? But to take a piece of lignum vitæ, that is almost like metal for hardness, and whose fibres run in every direction, and undertake to whittle that, is a different matter. The credit goes with the difficulty. The

intense interest goes with the necessity that there has been for forth-putting, and skill, and patience, and power.

I can conceive, if I look at the measure of the law of God, that there are reasons why God should say to the saints that are emerging into heaven, "I charge even you with folly, and I am ashamed even of you." But, after all, when I consider that those that are born out of earth into heaven have been born of the heart-love of the Saviour, and that he looks upon them with the parental instinct, and not with a judicial, and that he deals with them by paternal relations, and not by magisterial; when I see what that parental instinct does to many men, and how it works—then I think I can perceive how, from the very top to the very bottom, Christ can say that he is not ashamed to call men brethren, for whom he has suffered, and for whom he is giving himself continually. He bears our sins and carries our sorrows, it is said. In other words, the whole problem of unfolding holiness out of the disciplines of this world, out of the struggles and sorrows of this sinful, mortal state, seems glorious to God.

We think of men simply as criminals. As an officer, newly appointed, chases down a thief or a burglar whom he has known nothing of before, with whose crimes or career he is ignorant, so we are accustomed to suppose God deals with men, looking upon them as criminals. But when you reflect that God made this earth on purpose; that he peopled it on purpose; that the very limitations of faculty and the necessities of life are part and parcel of the original, organic creation; that God takes the world in its successive generations, in its struggles, in its developing experiences, and concerns himself with the problem of how, having peopled the earth, to bring men up through successive generations, until they are fit to be saints in glory, then you can enter into a conception of the word of God which declares that Christ is not ashamed of this work, nor of those who are in the necessity of this work. The world is to him an educating institution.

Banish from your minds an oriental monarchy. Banish the conception of such glory as lies in external appearances and external adjuvants. Consider what it is for God to be glorious. It is the glory of pity unfathomable. He considers glory to lie in long-suffering love. It is not that he shoots the light of his countenance far as the sun shoots its beams, that makes God proud. It is because he knows how to work for men that are ungrateful, that his heart swells with consciousness of its power. It is not because he is able, as it were by his hands, to span easily the orbs that fill immensity. It is the glory of magnanimity; it is the glory of waiting upon imperfection and weakness; it is the glory of pardoning and healing, and pardoningagain and healing again, and still continuing to pardon and heal to the uttermost and to the end—it is this that makes divine glory.

It is the power of God's heart to be magnanimous that makes him think well of himself. There lies his glory.

Look, then, upon the work to be done in this world. We can understand, if we consider it in its entirety, that this world is a school; that it is a healing hospital; that it is a training ground; that the divine problem is, how to take the germ of life, life in that stage in which it is furthest removed from spirituality, and bring it steadily up through all its transmutations, from age to age, until it becomes divine; and to do it through suffering, through long-suffering, and through patience; to do it by inspiration; to do it by pain and by joy, by sorrow and by gladness, by all means. So to teach the human soul, and lift upon it the light of divine glory, that it shall become like God—that is the work to be done in this world.

Christ is not ashamed of this work. He is not ashamed of it in any of its stages or steps, nor in any point or period of its development.

If any marvel, and say, "How can purity be pleased with impurity? How can God be pleased with that which he must needs look upon if he becomes companionable with the human soul?" you know, and I know how he can. You know, and I know that we love, and love dearly, those that not only are full of faults, but that are rude and impure. Woe be to children if it were not possible to love things that are inferior, and poor, and bad! But every mother's heart, every father's heart, has learned the divine lesson—has learned this law by which to interpret the divine nature itself, in this—that we learn to love children, not so much for what they are, as for what they are to be. Over and above that mere blind impulse by which we love infants—the mere love of offspring—is companionable love. Every man is conscious in regard to his children, and, I trust, also in a large sphere, in regard to many of his friends, that the love he bears to them is not love of their faults, but love in spite of their faults. For *fault* is only another name for faculties imperfectly, blindly, rudely, stupidly exercised. Over-action or under-action, oscillation, fluctuation, want of proportion, want of training in every part—this it is that goes to make up what is called *fault*, or *sin*. And we are conscious that we love men, not altogether for what they are now, but for what they promise—for the hope that we have of their manhood. We see through fault the coming virtue. We see through blemish the dawning beauty. Now, in the orchard and in the gardens, lying far northward, the russet cloak of winter is beginning to unbuckle, and let out the blossoming buds; and all the trees stand, not yet beautiful, but with a faint color prophesying the coming of beauty, on the tip of petal and leaf. We, looking upon them, see nothing but the russet brown; and yet we rejoice in the coming blossoms by an-

ticipation. And so it is in every household of virtuous and intelligent parentage. So is it, also, in God's greater household. Men are looked upon in all their rudeness, in all their imperfections; but these are the nascent states, the struggling states, the states that are working toward something higher. And there is manhood beyond. There is something yet for which the soul is reaching and striving. And these very battles and defeats which it has here are all of them on the way to something higher and better. Men see it in a small way in their own households: God in a larger way in the whole race.

All the suffering has not been for nothing. All the conflicts and disorders have not been for nothing. They have been the creation groaning and travailing in pain until now; but on the way to a glorious experience. "The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly." We were not asked if we wanted to come into such a state as this. We were to be under the companionship, the inspiration, the moulding power, of God; and he is at work in nations; and through ages he has been working; and, looking upon his great work, he is not ashamed of it. He is not ashamed of his scholars—neither of those in the lowest, the intermediate, or the highest form. They are all his. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. And partly he is in communion with them. Not because there is not much that is repulsive to a pure and high nature; but for his own reasons, which he gives here:

"As Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

Here the apostle recognizes distinctly that when Christ gives himself to the church, it is not a church perfected, or orbed into beauty and glory. He gives himself for it, and gives himself for it that he may, by his own power, bring it into that state, and present it finally to the throne of God without wrinkle, spot, or blemish. It is the final result. It is coupling the end with the beginning that makes it possible that Christ should identify himself with struggling humanity in this world. And so he says, "I am not ashamed to call you poorest ones brethren."

Without further unfolding this great, this wonderful truth, which will bear exploration in every direction, and with growing sympathy and growing wonder, I ask whether any one need fear to begin a new Christian life with such a Saviour.

If I dwell in Greenland, and a man says to me in November, "Turn the soil and plant your seeds," I say, "What! in November? and in Greenland? What garden can I hope for under the frigid latitudes of

the extreme north? Why should I throw away my labor for the frost to devour it?" But if I am living under the equator; if I dwell upon the Magdalena river, right under the equator, what season is there why I may not be exhorted to make my garden and plant my seeds? The benign sun never leaves me. All the time, day and night, through every week of the whole year, it is summer there. And I need never fear there to plant my seed, and rear fruit and flower.

I can conceive that a man might be placed under such circumstances that the attempt to be good would be so discouraging, the difficulties so great, help so remote, the prospects of success so extremely dubious, that he would fall back appalled, and say, "I will not attempt it." But now, since all power is given unto Christ, since he stands as the equatorial sun, above all his struggling people, saying to each and all of them, "I am not ashamed to be called your brethren; I identify myself with you; I know your tears and your temptations; I know your sins and your sufferings; I have been like you; I have been in circumstances such as you are in; I have wrestled against just such difficulties as you have to contend with; and I have not forgotten it; and I have gone up on high that I might with more power and breadth of influence succor all those that need succoring; and I am still your brother, and am not ashamed of you: I am not ashamed of you whom drink tempts, if you manfully wage the conflict; I am not ashamed of you whom lust blears, if the purpose is still strong and firm in you to overcome, by the power of God, the evil inclination; I am not ashamed of you whom avarice blasts and rusts, if there is set up against it the standard of the Lord, and you are determined, whatever may be the circumstances, to overcome that power which threatens to destroy the purity of your soul; I am not ashamed of the dullest, nor the poorest, nor the least influential"—now, is there any one that may not begin a Christian life? If such is our God, who may not be encouraged to go forward in the way of truth and holiness? If, when his prayers go up, they go into the hands of such a One; if all the invitations to a Christian life are those that come from a Brother's lips—from the lips of One who is not ashamed of our poorness, our vileness, our dullness, or our remissness—then any man can be a Christian. Not that every man has omnipotent power in himself; for "without me," Christ says, "you can do nothing." As the branch that is broken from the vine withereth, and can not bear fruit, so Christ says, "Except ye abide in me, the divine life can not be nourished and fed in you." But he also says, "With me ye can do all things." And to every one that has sought by morality, that has sought by resolutions, that has sought by his own strength alone, to live a true, noble spiritual life, I propose Jesus, the Saviour, who took upon himself the form of a man, humbled himself, and became

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; who has been tempted in all points like as you are, yet without sin; who is not separated from you because he is invisible; and who has gone on high that he may have more power in your behalf—not that he may forget you. I present the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to you, and say, If he is not ashamed to call you brethren, are you ashamed to call him brother? Are you ashamed of such a Saviour as that, who is not ashamed of you?

There is every encouragement for a man to begin a Christian life, however old he is, or however young; however much he may be bound by habits, or however free he may be from contaminating habits. There is a way open in which every man may walk, if he take the proffered help of the Son of God.

Need any one be discouraged who has begun to live a Christian life, because so often he has failed and fallen into backsliding? Is a true pupil discouraged because so many of his lessons are imperfect, because he has had forced holidays which have broken up the impetus of study, if still the purpose to be a student remains with him? Whatever may have been the arguments of the past, let them be forgotten. Try again. There are thousands of Christians who too soon grow discouraged, saying, "I have proved that I was mistaken. I have proved that the root of the matter was not in me. There is no use; I have tried and failed." There is all the use in the world. No man ever fails until death settles the great conflict. Because you have begun and lagged, because you have begun and stumbled, because you have begun and gone back a little way, do not give up the whole contest.

There is encouragement, since we have One that is not ashamed of us, in spite of our defections and inferiorities. Why should we not, therefore, gird up our loins, and take a fresh hold, with new consecration, on the Christian life? Will not every day's experience give reason and argument for gratitude to such a Lord as this? Is there not in every Christian man's life and experience reason for blessing, for thanks, for gratitude, that may not admit of expression, to him that has revealed his Son Jesus Christ, the Helpful, the Loving, the Patient, the Gentle?

I think I have learned more of the nature of my Master from my bad than from my good. We learn both ways. But it is the sense of God's *graciousness* that impresses me. When I am penetrated with a conviction of my own unworthiness; when my sins look like mountains to me; when my heart sinks within me; and there comes over the mountain, dawning bright as the morning star, the thought of Christ's full mercy and endless patience; when I have a sense of the great goodness of God, as it is revealed in urgent contrast with

my own sense of inferiority—then it is that my conception of God is more glorious to me than any other experience. Out of all my deficiencies, out of my ten thousand blemishes, there rises up the view of a gentle God.

Do you never think what a trouble your temper was to your mother? Do you never think, now that she is gone, what a wayward child you were? Do you never think how beautiful she seems to you in the retrospect, as she used to stand so quiet, so loving, waiting for you to come round to your better demeanor? And when you think back, of your mother, do not you find that those points where you were the most difficult to get along with are the points in which you see that her character was sweetest, most radiant, most beauteous? From the sinfulness of my nature I think I get the noblest views of God, his patience, his forgiving love, his kindness, his generosity, and that great-heartedness by which, looking upon my transgression, he says to me, "Be not discouraged; try again; I am not ashamed to call you brother." And so he reaches down the hand of his heart to my sinful heart, and not only grants me forgiveness, but fills me with zeal and holy purpose. And God grant that this view may be stronger and stronger till I go home, to return love for love; till I stand in Zion and see God. Then temptation shall die forever from the light of his countenance. Then, when once I am there, there shall be no more selfishness, no more temptation, and no more fear, but perfect love which casts out these things.

You, my dear Christian friends,* who have just united yourselves with God's people—in the morning of your life most of you—have entered a service the most blessed that can happen to the human heart in this world. Do not be discouraged because you find difficulties You are not saints. I have not encouraged you to join this church because I thought you were saints. I have not looked for eminence of experience, but for beginnings of experience. I have looked for sproutings—not for blossoms or fruit. You have entered upon a service in which your Master is gentler than your parents could be—a benignant Saviour, a magnanimous Saviour, an ever-present Saviour, who is not ashamed of you, and will not be, whatever you do, or wherever you go. But oh! if anywhere the snare entangles your feet; if the net is thrown over you; if you do wrong, and fall utterly prostrate, remember, in your deepest penitence and anguish of sorrow, to hear the voice saying still, "My child, I am not ashamed of you." If you can not look in the face of man, look up into the face of God. There is more mercy there than there is in all the world beside.

Never forget that you are the children of divine love. It is love

* Of those to whom these remarks were addressed, thirteen were received into the church by letter, and fifty-two on profession of their faith.

that bore you. It is love that has brought you to these moods of penitence, and these drawings toward a better life. It is love that will take care of you. It is love better than the father's, better than the mother's, better than all earthly love. And to the great and unfailing store of that love with which the earth is embosomed, I commit you, with the faith that you will persevere to the end, and that you will finally be saved.

After the blessing is pronounced, we shall—a great many of us for the first time in our lives—unite joyfully together in participating in these emblems of the Saviour; and for my life, I can not, and never could, be sorry in taking them. I can not help thinking of Christ as alive—not as dead. Though I think back, in the presence of these ceremonials, to his passion and death, yet there is that in my nature and heart which always bounds from the darkness toward the light, from the defeat toward the triumph. And I rejoice when I take the broken body, because I think what that broken body has done. It has broken the power of sin, it has broken the power of the devil, it has broken the power of evil, in this world. That blood is shed; but oh! I do not think of the shedding. I think of the cleansing which it has wrought in every age, in so many nations, and of the power that it is yet to exert throughout all the world. Come, Christian brethren, all of you, with us, to-day. Come every heart, whether belonging to the church or not, that belongs to Christ, and that, in the consciousness of its own weakness and want, is willing to fly to Christ. To you belongs this service. To you belong its privileges. And I cordially invite you—every one who is a child of Christ—without ecclesiastical condition, and on this general ground. All that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, and are endeavoring to follow him, are our brethren. Come, join with us in the celebration of his dying love.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O THOU blessed God! though thou art not revealed to our outward eye, and we see no form such as men wear, yet thou art present, and thou makest thyself known to the hidden man. Thou holdest communion with our spirit. We know that thou art with us. And all that is good in us, and all that is loving, leaps up and calls thee Father. We rejoice in the benedictions of the past. We rejoice in the promises that hang as clouds over the future, raining down abundantly of thy goodness and of thy mercy. We believe in thee, and trust thee utterly, because thou art God, and changest not, and art the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, immutable in holiness, immutable in goodness, and in love. We rejoice that thou wilt not suffer transgression upon us, but wilt chastise it. We rejoice that thou wilt not suffer selfishness to ravage the world, but hast set up against it in the soul itself thine everlasting law. We rejoice that the course of thine administration, and thy providential government, make it plain to men that thou dost love purity, and truth, and fidelity, and gentleness, and meekness, and mercy, and love. We thank thee that men are not permitted to be happy who transgress thy law; that thou art bringing them back by thy punishments

and thy penalties to their obedience again; and that thou wilt yet fashion them into thine own perfect image, and gather them, through long ages, and in multitudes beyond number, into the kingdom of the heavenly Father.

We thank thee for the church upon the earth—the brotherhood of those that are seeking a common land and a common cause. We thank thee that for so many ages there have been such victories in the church, and such trophies of thy grace. We thank thee that the church has been a harbor and a shelter here, that so many have found it a refuge and a comfort, and that so many still are flocking to it. We beseech of thee that it may prove to every one of them a school and a sanctuary. May every one find here that communion, those inspirations, those incitements to duty, and those consolations, by which their Christian life shall be fed. And may the memory of this sacred hour bless every one who has been more immediately concerned in it. May none, wandering from their present vows and intentions, forsake the service of Him who loved them, and gave himself for them. And more and more may the light dawn upon each one of them. At once may they consecrate their life to the service of Christ, and walk in the way of beneficence, living not for themselves, but for others. May they go forth light bearers, and may they show the way to others round about them.

We thank thee for all these histories so far consummated. For some, parents have prayed long, and died without the sight. But they behold from heaven, to-day, the graciousness of God toward their beloved children. To-day, though far away, many remember what shall transpire in the sanctuary, and are uttering thanksgiving and praise over their children that were lost, but are found again. To-day, in the presence of many, their children have risen up, and are doubly united to them now, by the ties of divine love, as well as by the affections of earth. How many there are that have been wanderers indeed! Some of them have gone far from God and from virtue, but they are now brought back again, and cleansed and joined to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. How many there are that have looked forward in the hope that yet, by and by, divine grace might wrestle with them! But now thou hast found them and comforted them. Thou art comforting and giving rest, indeed, to some who have been long soul-tossed, and at unrest.

And we beseech of thee, O Lord! that thou wilt accept our thanks for each one of them, and for them all, and for their parents, and for their dear friends, that rejoice in their present joy, and pray that this may be but the beginning, the dawn of that light which shall shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

We beseech of thee, O God! that thou wilt draw many others in. If there be any that are storm-tossed and weary—especially any that are travelers, sick, forlorn, without friends in a friendless land—oh! that thou wouldst bring them to thyself; to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; to the love and fellowship of Christ's church on earth.

And we beseech of thee that the labors of parents in behalf of their households may be greatly blessed of God. May their children be early brought into the true faith. May they learn, with the knowledge of how to learn their father and mother, how to exercise greater love toward the Redeemer. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt fill the families and households of this church with thy presence.

We pray that thou wilt be with all our beloved brethren wherever they are. Go with those that are scattered through the summer up and down throughout the land, and over the sea, and far away. Grant that everywhere they may be, if not within the sound of the bell of the sanctuary, yet within the sound of thy spirit. May they hear thy voice. May it be a sanctuary wherever thou dost meet their souls. And grant, we pray thee, that all of us, as we are journeying with various oppressions, and vicissitudes, and sufferings, and losses, and bereavements, or with added prosperity, and joys, and triumphs, we may neither be discouraged by our trouble, nor over-elated by our prosperity. May we remember, in every joy, the better joys; and in every sorrow, the sorrowless land. In all our trouble here, may we understand that it is the wind of God to bring us safely across the voyage. May we take heart, and play the part of *men*, doing well and faithfully our work on earth, and living in a tender and growing faith of immortality beyond the grave. And there gather us with the general assembly and with the church of the first-born, to sin no more, and therefore no more to sorrow; to go out no more wanderers, to be at home, forever present with the Lord.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

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30	7,500	708	2,708	10,208
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1-26w

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Cash Capital, ...	$500,000 00
Surplus, ...	1,566,854 10
Cash Assets, . . .	2,066,854 10

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